

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

TRSE-00 EB-07 /062 W

----- 025201

P R 070856Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 888

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 9644

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, J, KS, US

SUBJECT: KOREAN REACTION TO JAPANESE ELECTION RESULTS

REF: TOKYO 17935

SUMMARY: KOREANS BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT VIEW THE RESULTS FROM JAPAN' LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS DECEMBER 5 AS SIGNALING NO MAJOR CHANGE IN EITHER JAPANESE-KOREAN OR JAPANESE-AMERICAN RELATIONS. KOREANS GENERALLY EXPRESSED SATISFACTION THAT CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATES FARED WELL, AND MODERATE CANDIDATES EVEN BETTER THAN MARXIST CANDIDATES DID WITH THE VOTERS. KOREANS BLAME PARTY FACTIONALISM FOR THE LDP'S LOSS OF SEATS IN THE DIET. THEY MAKE NO PREDICTIONS AND EXPRESS NO PREFERENCES AS TO THE IDENTITY OF THE NEW PRIME MINISTER, BUT SOME EXPRESS CONCERN THAT THE INEVITABLE POWER STRUGGLE COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE STABILITY OF NORTHEAST ASIA AND IMPROVEMENTS IN ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS MAY BE DELAYED. JAPANESE POLCOUNS, IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, SUGGESTED THAT RELATIVE INCREASE OF STRENGTH OF OPPOSITION WOULD MAKE IT NECESSARY FOR JAPANESE DIPLOMATS TO MAKE MORE FREQUENT REPRESENTATIONS TO ROKG ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE KOREAN PRESS GAVE FRONT TOP HEADLINES TO THE

JAPANESE LOWER HOUSE ELECTION RESULTS, EMPHASIZING THE LDP'S LOSS OF ITS 21 YEAR MAJORITY AND THE PROBABLE CONSEQUENT RESIGNATION OF MIKI, BUT ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS SAW NO INDICATION THAT THE RESULTS HERALD ANY MAJOR CHANGE IN JAPANESE-KOREAN OR JAPANESE-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THE TYPICAL PUBLIC REACTION OF KOREAN OFFICIALS WAS THAT OF ASSEMBLYMAN AND DRP POLICY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PAK CHUN-KYU, WHOM THE MASS CIRCULATION HANGUK ILBO QUOTED AS SAYING: "THE LDP FAILED TO OBTAIN A MAJORITY BECAUSE OF ITS FAILURE TO ADJUST THE NUMBER OF NOMINATIONS PER DISTRICT AMONG LDP FACTIONS." HE NOTED THAT THE CONSERVATIVE FORCES HAVE NOT DECREASED, AND THE MODERATES AND INDEPENDENTS HAVE INCREASED AT THE EXPENSE OF THE REFORMIST AND SOCIALIST PARTIES.

PAK ADDED: "THEREFORE, THE LDP IS SAFE ENOUGH TO HAVE A COALITION CABINET WITH ANY PARTY OR INDEPENDENTS, AND I THINK THAT THERE WILL BE NO SPECIFIC CHANGE IN FUTURE ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS." OTHER PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND EDITORIALS DIVERGE ONLY SLIGHTLY FROM THAT VIEW.

2. PRIVATELY, HOWEVER, KOREAN OFFICIALS EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN THAT THE LDP'S THIN MANDATE PRESAGES A SUCCESSION STRUGGLE THAT WILL DESTABILIZE PARTY CONTROL OVER THE DIET AND HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE STABILITY OF NORTHEAST ASIA. IN A CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF DECEMBER 7, JAPAN-ROK COORDINATING COMMITTEE SECGEN KIM CHU-IN (WHO HAS CLOSE CONNECTIONS TO THE LDP LEADERSHIP AND IS PRO-FUKUDA) SAID THAT THE ELECTION OUTCOME HAD PRODUCED AN UNSTABLE SITUATION WITHIN THE LDP WHICH, WHILE PROBABLY DESTROYING MIKI'S CHANCES TO CONTINUE AS PM, COULD GIVE MIKI LEVERAGE TO KEEP FUKUDA FROM GETTING THE JOB BY THREATENING TO BOLT THE PARTY. KIM THOUGHT LDP MAJORITY OF 257 (INCLUDING INDEPENDENTS WHO HE SAID HAVE ANNOUNCED LDP AFFILIATION) WOULD BE OK IF THEY STUCK TOGETHER. HE THOUGHT DSP WOULD COOPERATE WITH POLICY OF CONTINUED CLOSENESS TO US, WHICH SHOULD SERVE ROK INTERESTS AS WELL. KIM PREDICTED FURTHER ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN ROK AND JAPAN

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WITH RAZOR THIN LDP MAJORITY INCLUDING FURTHER DELAY IN RATIFICATION OF THE ROK/JAPAN CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT, HE SPECULATED THAT WHILE NORTH KOREA MIGHT TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION BY PROPOSING AN IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS, INCLUDING POSSIBLY DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION, THIS WOULD PROBABLY BE REJECTED BY THE JAPANESE. FONMIN PARK EXPRESSED NO CONCERN OVER ELECTION OUTCOME IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR.

3. JAPANESE EMBASSY POLCOUNS MABUCHI TOLD EMBOFF ON
AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 7 THAT HE EXPECTS NO FUNDAMENTAL
CHANGE IN JAPANESE POLICY TOWARD KOREA, BUT THAT THE
REDUCED LDP STRENGTH WOULD MEAN INCREASED OPPOSITION PARTY
INFLUENCE, MAKING IT NECESSARY FOR JAPANESE DIPLOMATS IN
SEOUL TO MAKE MORE FREQUENT REPRESENTATIONS TO ROKG ON
HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES, IN RESPONSE TO DIET INTERPELLATIONS.
HE ALSO THOUGHT HE PERSONALLY MIGHT HAVE TO VISIT
MRS. KIM DAE-JUNG. MOREOVER, HE THOUGHT THE DEFEAT OF
JSP RIGHTWING LEADERS EDA AND KATSUMATA WOULD END, FOR
THE TIME BEING, JSP EFFORTS TO EFFECT A RAPPROCHEMENT
WITH THE ROK.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 DEC 1976
Decapton Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976SEOUL09644
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760451-0495
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761266/aaaaceqd.tel
Line Count: 129
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 TOKYO 17935
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 MAY 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <16 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KOREAN REACTION TO JAPANESE ELECTION RESULTS
TAGS: PFOR, JA, KS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006